The Political Economy of Development

*In Theory and History*

Gallatin School of Individualized Study
New York University

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**Guangzhou, China (Courtesy Jia Feng)**

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Professor: Rosalind Fredericks  
Office: Room 618, 1 Washington Place  
Office Hours: Th. 9:30-12:30  
Contact: rcf2@nyu.edu

Course: IDSEM-UG1636  
Semester: Spring 2012  
Time: T/Th 3:30-4:45pm  
Location: Room 601, 1 Wash. Place

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

What are the historical origins of the unequal geographies of wealth we see today and the institutions purportedly charged with relieving them? How can the international Development project be contextualized within transformations of the global world order and transnational capitalism? Why did certain Asian countries become economic tigers while many African nations saw their economies shrink? How do histories and theories of development help us to grapple with some of the greatest challenges faced in the era of globalization?

The various meanings of the word “development” have changed over time, but it has become shorthand for a complex set of social, economic, political, cultural and institutional transformations over the last five hundred years. This course provides an introduction to the political economy of development in theoretical, historical, and comparative perspective. In so doing, it makes the fundamental distinction between (“big D”) Development as a post-war international project that emerged in the context of decolonization, and capitalist (“little d”) development as a dynamic and highly uneven historical process of global integration and transformation. The purpose of the course is to highlight the interplay of theories and histories of “big D” and “little d” development in order to draw insight towards understanding different trajectories of socio-spatial change.
The course draws primarily on scholarship from the fields of political economy, geography, anthropology, development studies, and history. The inquiry is organized into four parts. Part 1 examines some of the most important and influential theoretical ideas and intellectual traditions which seek to explain the historical origins of capitalist development. This provides a foundation for understanding the legacies of previous eras of empire in shaping today’s international political economy as well as the origins of the core ideas influencing Development policy. Part 2 will trace the history of Development as an international project. We examine how Development emerged from the process of decolonization in the 1940s, and the ways in which theories and practices of Development have shifted over time. Tracing this history, we will consider Development as a set of discourses as well as concrete practices and effects. Part 3 analyzes regional trajectories of socio-spatial change in theory and history through detailed case studies from East Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Finally, Part 4 will consider key themes framing contemporary development discourse and practice. Topics include: human rights and development; the greening of development; and gender and microfinance.

REQUIREMENTS

- **Class attendance and participation.** You are expected to read all assigned materials, attend all classes, and participate actively in discussions. If you are unable to attend class, you must let me know and come to my office hours that week. In the case that you miss a film screened in class, you must view the film in your own time. You will only be allowed one unexcused absence during the semester without penalty. Consistent lateness will be penalized as well.

- **Response papers.** You are required to write a one-page weekly response paper examining a selection or theme from the readings assigned for a total of 5 weeks, to be posted on Blackboard by 8pm on the Monday evening before class. These responses are not meant as summaries of the readings, but, rather, as analysis of the way the readings relate to each other and the questions they pose for the larger themes raised in the class. Though individual responses will not be graded, the quality of the analysis and writing will be taken into account in the final participation assessment. You may choose the weeks for which you will post a response, but you should have at least one response from each Part of the course.

Writing Assignments

- **Short paper 1: Theories of Development.** Due Friday, March 2nd.

- **Short paper 2: Histories of “big D” Development.** Due Friday, March 30th.

- **Short paper 3: Regions and Trajectories.** Due Thursday, April 19th.

- **Final paper.** Details TBA. Due: Thursday, May 10th.

*Late policy.* Unless you have received an extension from me (only granted for serious/medical issues), lateness will be penalized as follows: each day that your paper is late, your grade will drop ½ of a grade point (e.g. from a B+ to a B). You are required to inform me if the paper is going to be more than two days late. I will only consider incompletes in extenuating circumstances and with prior agreement.
Course Grades:
- Attendance/Participation/Response Papers: 25%
- Short Papers: 45%
- Final Paper: 30%

OFFICE HOURS and CONTACT

I will hold office hours on Thursdays from 9:30-12:30pm in my office. These will be either on a first come, first serve, or there will be a sign-up sheet on my door.

Email: I am best reached by email at rcf2@nyu.edu. Although I do encourage you to stay in touch with issues of concern, I also urge you to be considerate with your emails. I will do my best to reply within 24 hours.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

READINGS and FILMS

Required readings for the course are listed in the weekly syllabus. Background readings are also listed, if you desire to do further research. All readings are either available through the library’s electronic resources, in the library’s reserves, or at the NYU Bookstore. At the Bookstore, you can purchase the following required textbook for the course:


The following is a list of some films relevant to the course. They will either be screened in class, or you are encouraged to watch them in your own time. Whenever possible, they have been placed on reserve at the library.

Bamako (2007)  
Commanding Heights (2006)  
China Blue (2005)  
Crude: The Real Price of Oil (2008)  
Darwin’s Nightmare (2004)  
Drowned Out (2002)  
Garbage Dreams (2009)  
Health for Sale (2007)  
Life and Debt (2001)  
Urbanized (2012)  

Maquilapolis (2006)  
Our Friends at the Bank (1997)  
Small Fortunes (2005)  
T-Shirt Travels (2001)  
The End of Poverty? (2009)  
The Price of Sugar (2007)  
Wasteland (2009)  
White King, Red Rubber, Black Death  
The Women’s Bank of Bangladesh  
Babakineria (1986).
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COURSE SYLLABUS

Week 1.  Introduction: The Object of Development
(January 24, 26)


Easterly, William. “Planners versus Searchers” and “The Legend of the Big Push” in The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good. (3-57).

PART 1: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Week 2.  Adam Smith, Classical, and Neoclassical Economics
(January 31; February 2)


Additional Reading:


Week 3.  Marx, Imperialism, and the Geography of International Capitalism (February 7, 9)

Marx, Karl & Frederick Engels. 1848. The Communist Manifesto.


Additional Reading:

Week 4. Colonial Regimes and Their Legacies (February 14, 16)


Film: Babakiueria (1986).

Additional Reading:


Week 5. FILM WEEK (February 21, 23)

[As Dr. Fredericks will be out of the country (observing the elections in Senegal) two documentary films will be shown in class: The End of Poverty?, and the Commanding Heights (PBS). Attendance will be taken and you will be responsible for the content of the films and the readings.]


PART 2: DEVELOPMENT AS A POST-WAR INTERNATIONAL PROJECT: A HISTORY OF CHANGING THEORIES AND PRACTICES

Week 6. The 1950s - 1970s: From Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) to Basic Needs
(February 28, March 1)


Additional Reading:


McNamara, Robert. ‘Paupers of the World and How to Develop Them,’ (Excerpts from the Address to the Board of Governors, World Bank, Nairobi 1973).


Week 7. The Neoliberal Counter-Revolution and Beyond
(March 6, 8)


Additional Reading:


**PART 3: REGIONS AND TRAJECTORIES**

**Week 8. The Late Industrializers and Asian Economic Miracles (South Korea)**  
*(March 20, 22)*


**Additional Reading:**


**Week 9. “Underdevelopment” in Africa (Congo)**  
*(March 27, 29)*


Additional Reading:


Mbembe, Achille. 2000. ‘At the edge of the world.’ *Public Culture* 12/1.


Zenawi, Meles. *African Development: Dead Ends and New Beginnings*.

Week 10. Latin America and the Third Way (Venezuela)  
(April 3, 5)

["Guest lecture by Alejandro Velasco."]

Readings TBA.

PART 4: KEY THEMES in CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT

Week 11. Human Rights and Development

["Guest Lecture with Vasuki Nesiah"]  
(April 10, 12)

Readings TBA.

Week 12. The Greening of Development  
(April 17, 19)


**Additional Reading:**


**Week 13. Gender and Microfinance**

(*April 24, 26*)


**Additional Reading:**


Connelly, M.P. et al. 2000. "Feminism and Development : Theoretical Perspectives." In Jane L. Parpart, M. Patricia Connelly, V. Eudine Barritteau (Eds.). *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*


**Week 14. The Road Forward: Reimagining Development (May 1, 3)**


Additional Readings:


